

Galatians 4 (21-31) The True Children of Abraham

I. The Promise of the New Covenant (21-24)

A. The Purpose of the Law (i.e. Scriptures) (21)

1. Paul accuses the Judaizers of desiring to be under the law
 - a. Here, "the law" is used to describe the Torah (the first five books of the Bible)
 - b. The Judaizers looked to the books of Moses to define their relationship with God
2. Paul implies that they do not understand "the law."
3. Paul admonishes them to actually listen to what the law is teaching –
 - a. The purpose of the entire Old Testament is to point to the New Covenant in Jesus
 - b. The Judaizers taught the law could make men right with God – it was never intended to do so
 - c. The Judaizers taught that the law was necessary to be an heir to the promise of Abraham

B. The Difference Between Abraham's Two Sons (22-23)

1. Abraham Had a Son from a slave and a Son from a free woman
 - a. The Son of Hagar (the slave) was a son "according to the flesh"
 - i. Abraham was promised an heir from God. When God's promise looked like it would go unfulfilled, Sarah convinced Abraham to lie with Hagar to produce an heir.
 - ii. Abraham and Hagar produced Ishmael. Ishmael was Abraham's son, but he was not the son who would inherit the promise – he was conceived "according to the flesh" (i.e. by Abraham and Sarah's lack of faith)
 - b. The Son of Sarah was a son "according to the promise"
 - i. Although God did not fulfill the promise as quickly as Abraham liked, Sarah did indeed conceive and gave birth to Isaac.
 - ii. God miraculously provided Isaac and passed the promise down to him from Abraham.

C. The Difference Between The Two Mothers (24)

1. Paul uses an Allegory describing the Old and New Covenants
 - a. He compares Hagar to the Old Covenant formed at Sinai, where Moses received the law
 - b. He compares Sarah to the New Covenant which is fulfilled in Jesus – the Covenant of Promise
2. Paul describes the Children of the Old Covenant as slaves
 - a. He continues his theme of being slave to the law

- b. He is showing them that the Old Covenant from Mount Sinai was never meant to be the avenue by which the seed of Abraham received the promise.

II. The Perfection of the New Covenant (25-27)

A. The Slavery of the Old Covenant (25)

1. He explicitly states that Hagar was a “type” of the Old Covenant Slavery comparing her with Mount Sinai
 - a. A “type” is something which points forward to a fulfillment
 - b. The OT is filled with “types” of Christ – people, places, and things that point forward to Him (i.e. the sacrifices, the temple, the priests, etc.)
 - c. Paul is making the point that not every physical descendent from Abraham are the heirs to the promise.
2. He explicitly states that Jerusalem (the earthly city) is a slave to the Old Covenant
 - a. This would have infuriated the Jews who believed the Gentiles were the descendents of Ishmael. They claimed descendency from Isaac.
 - b. She (Jerusalem) is in slavery with her children (they have returned to slavery to the law)

B. The Freedom of the New Covenant (26)

1. Paul says there is another Jerusalem
 - a. This Jerusalem is “above” – it is a heavenly city called Jerusalem.
 - b. This Jerusalem is the perfect fulfillment of what the earthly Jerusalem was always meant to be.
 - c. This Jerusalem is free – no longer in bondage to the law
2. Paul says “She” (Heavenly Jerusalem) is our mother
 - a. Believers in Christ look for the perfect city – not the earthly Jerusalem which is enslaved to Law
 - b. Our mother (Paul includes himself) is the heavenly city – which means we (believers) are not children of the slave woman (Hagar), we are children of the promise.

C. The Fulfillment of the New Covenant (27)

1. Paul quotes Isaiah 54:1 to illustrate his point
 - a. Isaiah 54 is a prophecy of rejoicing that God’s people finally pursue righteousness – and Isaiah 54 is the only passage in the Old Testament except for Genesis where Sarah is mentioned.
 - b. The chapter right before Isaiah 54 is the song of the suffering servant (which is a prophecy of Jesus) – Paul’s intention is to show that the fulfillment of God’s promise for Israel’s rejoicing and blessing is found in the suffering servant. The fulfillment of the Covenant is in Christ.

2. Paul Intends the Galatians to understand that the fulfillment of the entire promise of blessing to Abraham is found in Jesus Christ – the prophet Isaiah even bore witness to this.
- III. The Heirs of the New Covenant (28-31)
- A. The Sons of Promise are still Persecuted (28-29)
 1. Paul states in no uncertain terms that the Galatian believers are the heirs of Abraham and Isaac's promise.
 2. Paul also reminds them that Ishmael (the son according to the flesh) persecuted Isaac (the son according to the promise)
 3. Paul tells them that persecution continues even today (29)
 - a. By this Paul shows that to attempt to bring believers in Christ back under the law in order to gain their righteousness is a form of persecution
 - b. Going back to any form of works righteousness is endangering their very souls
 - c. The Jewish teachers would have found this proposition offensive. Paul was saying that they were the sons of Ishmael and they were persecuting God's children.
 - B. The Sons of Promise Alone Receive the Inheritance (30)
 1. Paul reminds them that Abraham was told to cast out the slave woman and her child
 - a. The Galatian believers must not bow to the demands of those who seek to bring them back under the dominion of the law
 - b. Believers today must not allow themselves to be influenced by those who would bring them back into the bondage of a works righteousness religion
 2. Paul assures them that only the Sons of Promise are Heirs
 - a. Abraham pleaded with God to allow Ishmael to inherit the promise because he loved Ishmael (Gen. 17:18)
 - b. God refused to grant Ishmael sonship and instead reaffirmed His promise to bring forth Isaac
 - c. Today, God still refuses sonship to those who seek to be righteous because of their works of law
 - C. The Sons of Promise are Believers in Christ (31)
 1. Paul concludes by saying explicitly that believers in Christ are the children of promise
 2. Paul again implies that those who seek to be justified by law are the children of slavery

Galatians 5:1 is a bridge between Paul's argument concluding chapter 4 and the new section in chapter 5. We will look at the verse when we deal with chapter 5 but we should list it here because Paul gives an exhortation based on his argument in chapter 4. Because we are children of the promise through faith in Jesus, Paul tells us to "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" – Gal. 5:1